

THE ARMY NATIONAL GUARD AND THE OPERATIONAL RESERVE FORCE

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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by

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ABSTRACT

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On October 29, 2008, Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates directed the development of plans to take action on 64 recommendations for the U.S. military reserve components submitted earlier in the year by a Congressionally-mandated commission. A key recommendation explicitly shifted the reserve components from a status as the nation's strategic reserve to that of an operational reserve.

Reviewing the history of the Army National Guard (ARNG) and its role in national defense since the Vietnam War to establish the current context, this paper will examine the feasibility of the directive as a matter of national security policy while focusing on the ARNG's basic combat element, the Brigade Combat Team (BCT). It will also propose recommendations to enhance the readiness of the ARNG BCTs to meet current operational force and future strategic reserve requirements.

The US recognized after the Vietnam War that committing the reserve components to a conflict should send a clear message regarding the importance of the military effort. Ensuring that the Army National Guard can fulfill the requirements incumbent with being the nation's operational reserve is of vital strategic importance.

THE ARMY NATIONAL GUARD AND THE OPERATIONAL RESERVE FORCE

... if the unfortunate circumstance should occur ... to use the Army again, we'll use the active, the National Guard and the Reserve together.

—Chief of Staff of the Army General Creighton Abrams¹

In 2005, 50 percent of the Army brigade combat teams serving in Iraq were from the National Guard.² This event highlights the changing function of the U.S. military's reserve components (RC) in the current era of persistent conflict, and how the leadership of the active Army was forced by necessity to rely on the National Guard for combat maneuver brigades.

Soon afterwards an intense examination started regarding what the role of the RC should be for the nation's defense. The Ronald W. Reagan National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005 established the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves (CNGR) which was charged by Congress to "recommend any needed changes in law and policy to ensure that the National Guard and Reserves are organized, trained, equipped, compensated, and supported to best meet the national security requirements of the United States."³ The Commission's final report to Congress and the Secretary of Defense, issued on January 31, 2008, addressed the fundamental strategic question facing the reserve components: whether they should retain their role as the nation's "strategic reserve" or transform into an "operational force." The Commission concluded that the United States needs an operational reserve force using the National Guard and the Reserves.⁴ The report's recommendations made it clear that a major transformation of the reserve component, similar to that undertaken following the Korean War, would be necessary.

Department of Defense (DoD) Directive 1200.17, *Managing the Reserve Components as an Operational Force*, soon followed, acknowledging the first recommendation of the CNGR's Final Report and formally establishing the reserve components of the armed forces as an operational force. Now as a matter of policy, the RC provides operational capabilities and strategic depth to meet the U.S. defense requirements across the full spectrum of conflict.⁵

The National Guard has the dual role of providing trained units for federal missions and supporting homeland defense by providing military support to civil authorities (governors) in the event of domestic emergencies.⁶ In an era of persistent conflict⁷ and terrorist threats to the homeland, ensuring the readiness of the RC combat units can be of strategic consequence. In particular, available and mission-ready Army National Guard (ARNG) combat maneuver units give the Army flexibility and the ability to meet unanticipated contingencies.

But, what are the implications of this policy for the Army National Guard? Is it a sound policy that takes into account the ARNG's state obligations while still honoring the social contract of the citizen-soldier, whose primary career is outside of the military? A higher operational tempo for the Army National Guard could potentially ruin this social contract, degrade the quality of Soldiers in the ARNG, and jeopardize homeland defense.

While there are certainly risks associated with any policy decision, this paper will study those risks and will review the history of policy as it applied to the ARNG's role in national defense since the Vietnam War to establish the context for the current policy. This paper will also examine the feasibility of DoD Directive 1200.17, and will propose

recommendations to enhance the readiness of the ARNG Brigade Combat Teams—the key combat maneuver element of the reserve component—to meet current operational force and future strategic reserve requirements.

ARNG Readiness since the Vietnam War

In 1973, US Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird established the Total Force policy which required the Department of Defense to plan, program, and budget the active and reserve components concurrently. It was viewed primarily as a means to access trained combat forces in times of the nation's need and to compliment the All Volunteer Force. Although the armed forces relied on the reserves and National Guard in previous conflicts, the reserve components were used only sparingly during the Vietnam War and manpower for the conflict was primarily drafted. But the policy was also implementation of a new doctrine championed by Army Chief of Staff General Creighton Abrams whereby America should never engage in another conflict like the Vietnam War without committing the citizen-soldiers of the Reserve and National Guard to demonstrate the nation's resolve to go to war. After General Abrams' premature death, however, the Total Army Concept was never fully realized or resourced. The U.S. Army Reserve (USAR) and ARNG units were under-budgeted, poorly equipped and marginally trained.⁸

Throughout the Cold War period, both of the Army's reserve components provided a spectrum of combat, combat support, and combat service support units as the nation's strategic reserve. RC unit readiness was based on the unit's war-trace (its war-time alignment within an active duty organization; for example, a corps in Europe) and when it was required to arrive in theater. The unit was scheduled to mobilize in

accordance with a Time Phased Force Deployment (TPFD) schedule, a mobilization and deployment model designed to provide forces on the schedule established by the combatant commander. RC units were required to arrive at the mobilization station at a certain level of personnel, training, and equipment readiness, and then would use the time there to reach final levels of readiness prior to deploying into the contested theater to relieve or reinforce active component forces already in the fight.

The call-up of Army Reserve Component forces to support the first Persian Gulf War could best be described as a painful success. The USAR provided combat support and combat service support units, but chronic personnel vacancies and equipment shortages had to be hastily filled at mobilization stations. The ARNG provided several field artillery units in the same fashion, but ultimately no combat maneuver units. Two mechanized brigades, designated as “round-out” brigades for two active duty divisions deployed to the Gulf, were mobilized, but did not deploy before the war was over. The issue of the brigades’ readiness is disputed by the active Army and the Guard, but the brigades were never validated as prepared for combat. Some Guardsmen contend that validation failure was the result of active component bias, but an official history points out that a 15-day extension to the post-mobilization training plan had been granted to the units to work out debilitating equipment issues.⁹

In the era of primarily peacekeeping missions which began after the end of Operation Desert Storm, the tiered readiness model driven by a TPFD continued to be used, but the reserve components were downsized along with the active component so that the nation could reap the “peace dividend” from the end of the Cold War. In what became known as the 1993 Off-site Agreement, the Army stabilized force structure and

transformed the organization of its reserve components, disbanding all but one battalion of the combat units in the Army Reserves. The USAR began to specialize in providing the total force with combat support and combat service support units. As a result, the majority of personnel and units of certain specialties reside primarily in the USAR, such as the Army's Psychological Warfare and Civil Affairs capabilities.¹⁰

The Army National Guard, however, continued to provide various combat units (along with organic combat support and combat service support capabilities) for the nation's strategic reserve. In addition, the DoD Bottom-Up Review completed in 1993 designated 15 ARNG brigades as enhanced brigades (e-brigades) capable of deploying faster (within 90 days of mobilization). This accelerated status required a higher state of readiness than other RC units, particularly in terms of equipment and manning levels, but the effort was again under-resourced. For example, e-brigades only trained at one of the Army's premier Combat Training Centers (CTC) once every eight years, while comparable active duty brigades trained at a CTC every other year.¹¹

Five years after Desert Storm and five years prior to the start of the Long War, the 1996 National Security Strategy was to "defeat aggression in two nearly simultaneous major regional conflicts [MRCs]."¹² More than 60 percent of the combat formations (divisions and maneuver brigades) in the Total Army were in the ARNG by then, but there were challenges to the Guard's combat role. The 1995 Commission on Roles and Missions of the Armed Forces advocated restructuring the ARNG's divisions into combat support and combat service support organizations,¹³ and for a while, this was widely construed as a call to eliminate all combat forces (or all but the e-brigades) from the ARNG.¹⁴

In a 2008 article, political scientists Michael Lynch and William Stover summarize the status of the reserve components during this period as:

In theory, National Guard and Reserve units were to have the same capabilities as their active duty counterparts. In practice, however, during the Col War and up until recently, the services followed a policy of tiered readiness. Those units that were “first to fight” were given the lion’s share of the resources. As a consequence, National Guard and Reserve units were under-resourced. For example, prior to 2001, Army Reserve and Army National Guard units were on average manned at only eighty percent of their unit requirement and equipped with only sixty-five percent of the equipment.¹⁵

The Development of the Operational Force Policy

After eight years of the Long War, however, the combat capabilities of the nation’s reserve components have been proven in war-time once again. As examples, about 15 percent of the total forces in Iraq and Afghanistan have been from the National Guard (including the Air Guard),¹⁶ and as of 2009, several Guard combat units have now completed more than one combat deployment. But did the ARNG (and the rest of the reserve component forces) become an operational force through a deliberate decision-making process, or was it simply the result of events? A brief examination of the process can help frame the efficacy of the policy for the future and possibly identify inherent risks.

One model for examining policy formulation uses Darwinian theory and the concept of “punctuated equilibrium.” Policy develops from a “policy primeval soup” of ideas and then evolves in fits and starts, providing policy solutions and creating (temporary) equilibrium until the next modification.¹⁷ Another model of government policy science described by Nikolaos Zahariadis would explain the speed of the evolution of the RC from a strategic reserve to an operational force as an emergent

solution that was somewhat protracted and then rapidly evolved into a convergent solution.¹⁸

Although there were many stakeholders in the decision-making process, there were no particular outspoken champions for an operational force policy, and before the Long War, there were no studies or reports calling for it either. Indeed, there was no widespread use of the term “operational force” to describe the RC until the initiation of the Commission on National Guard and Reserves in May 2006. Then Chief of Staff of the Army, General Peter Schoomaker stated before the Commission in December 2006 that operationalizing the RC was one of the three choices that the nation had to make or the active forces would be broken by the demands of war; the other two choices being reduce the demands or increase the active forces, neither of which were feasible at that time.¹⁹

Other factors contributed to the evolution. For example, in 2003 the Army initiated organizational transformation to the modular force, standardized division and brigade organizations, and common core missions throughout the Total Army.²⁰ This combined with new equipment fieldings upon mobilization reinforced the interoperability of the ARNG with the active Army in combat theaters (contrasted with the communications issues between AC and RC units during the Hurricane Katrina disaster because the radios used by the Guard were an older generation).²¹

Therefore, both concepts, transformation and operational research, help explain that the process was an evolution of necessity because the ARNG and other RC forces were so effectively integrated into the current warfighting that there was a de facto operational reserve before the formal declaration in 2008. Policy science has not

matured to a level where the quality of a policy can be determined based on the manner of its development, and although the operationalization of the RC represents a drastic change in national security policy, its evolutionary development makes it clear that it meets an important requirement. As this environment changes this theory predicts that the characteristics of the current RC policy could become dysfunctional, causing another evolution of the policy, but the nature or speed of that change cannot be predicted.

Transforming the ARNG to an Operational Force

DoD Directive 1200.17 not only reflects the nation's reliance on the reserve components in the current theaters, it also codifies the permanent change that will sustain America's military power into an era of persistent conflict. A team from the National Guard Bureau (NGB) has already developed the following working definition

An Operational Reserve Force is: a reserve of operational capabilities organized and resourced in a recurrent predictable cycle to support Army requirements, in peace and war; an Operational Reserve Force is fully manned, equipped, and trained to provide ready units across the full spectrum of operations.²²

Note that included in the definition is the aspiration that the force is "fully manned, equipped and trained." The implication is that the portion of the force that is not close to full readiness should not be considered part of the operational reserve. At any time there will be both AC and RC units that are substantially diminished during the Reset periods of the ARFORGEN cycle.

Using this definition, a specific examination of the policy's ability to man, equip and train ARNG operational forces, specifically combat maneuver units, can be conducted. The key components of land power in the Army National Guard include the Brigade Combat Team (BCT), the Combat Aviation Brigades and the Fires Brigade. The

BCT, however, is the basic maneuver combat unit of the U.S. Army, and is the best touchstone for this examination.

Of the 70 BCTs in the Total Army (active and reserve components), 40 percent are resident in the ARNG.²³ In comparison, the United States Marine Corps fields the only other brigade-size combat maneuver reserve units in the form of three rifle regiments. As a point of clarification, although the USAR does not have brigade combat teams, it does provide units that are similar to other organizations in the ARNG; there is functional overlap with units that are part of the ARNG's Functional, Sustainment, and Battlefield Surveillance and Maneuver Enhancement Brigades. Of the 28 BCTs in the Army National Guard, 20 (71 percent) are light Infantry Brigade Combat Teams (IBCT), seven (25 percent) are mechanized Heavy Brigade Combat Teams (HBCT), and one (four percent) is a motorized Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT).

The ARNG has already begun to reform its manning policy. Currently, the ARNG's overall strength is closer to 100 percent required (more than 349,000 personnel) than it has ever been in recent history. Approximately 35,000 new citizen-soldiers were recruited between Fiscal Years 2005 and 2008 while the ARNG simultaneously fully rationalized force structure to eliminate excess positions and dropped non-participating members.²⁴ There is at least a 10 percent gap between assigned and trained end strengths, however, because the Guard does not have a separate Training, Transients, Holding, Students (TTHS) account (like the active component) to assign personnel who are in the training pipeline; a citizen-soldier can actually be assigned to a roster position before he or she has even completed initial entry training.

The most recent comprehensive study of mobilizing ARNG units cross-leveling to fill vacancies showed that from 2003 to 2006 deploying brigade combat teams had to fill 25 percent of their positions by cross-leveling with fillers from other Guard units, significantly reducing the capabilities of those units and causing a ripple effect across the force. Despite the active status of an ARNG unit that has been mobilized, less than one percent of the fillers for deploying National Guard units have ever come from the Active Component. Efforts to resolve the TTHS deficit are still being worked²⁵, but to truly incorporate the ARNG into the operational force, personnel policies will have to adapt to fill mobilized ARNG unit vacancies using active duty replacements like active component units preparing for a deployment.

Regarding equipment, the ARNG has a history of receiving the “hand-me-downs” (cascading down) from the active component and fielding “in lieu of” items for more modern equipment requirements; for example, using World War II-era two-and-a-half ton trucks in lieu of the Light-Medium Tactical Vehicles which started fielding to the active component in 1996. As recently as 2008, the ARNG only met 43.5 percent of its equipment requirements²⁶, but equipment should not continue to be a readiness issue. Due to an earlier (prior to the DOD Directive 1200.17) effort to equip the Guard for the operational demands, the equipment on-hand rate for the ARNG will be approximately 80 percent at the end of Fiscal Year 2010, and is on track to reach 100 percent for the ARNG BCTs by 2015.²⁷ Legislation, to include the National Defense Authorization Act, will likely continue resourcing of the ARNG to levels comparable to that of similar active component units until completion in Fiscal Year 2013.²⁸

ARNG units are still liable to equipment issues; for example, property assigned to the Army National Guard might be required to stay-behind in theater and will subsequently not be available to the original owning ARNG unit.²⁹ To ensure that the Guard maintains its inventory, the 2008 National Defense Authorization Act requires the Chief of the National Guard Bureau to utilize measures to ensure the equipping of the Guard according to plans.³⁰

Satisfactory resolution to ARNG BCT equipping and manning challenges will make them comparable with the active Army BCTs. The biggest challenge to ensuring the readiness of the ARNG BCTs remains training. The Army has utilized its reserve components as an operational force for several years and by November 2009 more than 313,000 Army Guardsmen had served in support of Operations Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom since 2001.³¹ This tremendous base of experience in the ARNG is further enhanced by accessions into the ARNG from the active component through the Continuum of Service which allows service members to transfer between components to fulfill their entire service obligations (usually eight years). These accessions have actually decreased since the start of the Long War though; less than 40 percent of first-term enlistments now have active duty experience as compared to 60 percent in 1997.³²

But unit readiness requires a multi-faceted training program that ensures individual qualification through small unit collective proficiency to BCT staff command & control competence. In the past, ARNG training was exacerbated by the shortages of equipment and personnel, but the key challenge with the ARNG has always been time:

a weekend a month and two weeks in the summer constrains a unit's ability to prepare for success on the battlefield.

For several years now, the ARNG has been using the Army Force Generation Model (ARFORGEN) which describes a five-year cycle through which a unit will “reset” personnel and equipment, complete progressive training requirements, and then become available to mobilize & deploy in the fifth year. If the unit is not tasked outside of the cycle and is properly resourced for the training, the ARFORGEN cycle allows ARNG units to complete most of their theater training requirements prior to mobilization, reducing the amount of time required to train post-mobilization and increasing “boots on the ground” time in theater to approximately 10 months.³³ Its predictability will help citizen-soldiers balance their military and civilian careers, and should also allow ARNG units to better balance training with state emergency commitments.³⁴

Due to the current OPTEMPO (operating tempo) though, the process has not been adhered to and on average Guard units spend just over three years of “dwell time” at home for each year mobilized.³⁵ ARFORGEN may eventually be successful as a unit rotational system, but still fail to live up to the individual Guardsman's expectations if manning issues in the ARNG remain unresolved. Manning issues have complicated mobilization training, with replacements filling vacancies for deployments, but returning to their home units upon demobilization and diminishing the collective expertise of the unit. The Secretary of Defense has also been adamant that RC mobilizations will last no more than 12 months even while some ARNG units attempt to add an additional month of Title 32 active duty training just prior to the actual mobilization (contiguous training) to better prepare for deployment.³⁶

Evaluating the Operational Force Directive as a Policy for the ARNG

Utilizing the base denominator of the BCT for examination, the operational reserve policy can safely be assessed as feasible for the ARNG. As described above, the historic equipment challenges can essentially be resolved and it is possible that the active and reserve components could soon develop a solution for the manning issues. By adhering to a disciplined process, ARNG BCTs should also be able to implement the five-year training scheme outlined in the ARFORGEN cycle.

Therefore, the key to the future success of the policy (and also the greatest area of risk) is with a strict adherence to the ARFORGEN cycle of readiness and mobilization. If this cycle can be accomplished without interference and the training resourced in accordance with unit plans, the ARNG can truly become the nation's operational reserve with a long-term benefit to national security that is relatively high; consider that every year, at least five additional BCTs could become mission available.

As history has shown though, strategic plans for the Army's RC are always at risk. While (as noted) several efforts to operationaize the ARNG are ongoing, a year has already passed without the Department of the Army and National Guard Bureau being able to agree on a definition of operational reserve force, personnel policies and other supporting directives. The transition is a complex effort and a service department already focused on the current warfighting appears not to be making it a priority despite the long-term benefits.³⁷

With legislation like the National Guard Empowerment Act of 2009, Congress has shown a high level of commitment to transitioning the reserve components into an operational reserve force, but budget pressures inevitably lead to downsizing of the

military. The ARNG's equipment modernization appears to be programmed for now, but maintenance of the property, personnel, and training will continue to incur costs. Risks to the long-term viability of the operational reserve through legislative action can be mitigated by increasing the force generation cycle; for example, a seven year ARFORGEN cycle for the ARNG would still make four BCTs available every year.

For Guardsmen, the considerations of the state government are just as important as the threats to national security. The overall improvement of National Guard capabilities from ongoing equipping and recruiting efforts should continue to receive the support of the state governors, but a predictable schedule of mobilization could also receive broad support. State executives are always concerned about their Guard's capability to respond to a state emergency during a major mobilization, but the risk of not having enough manpower or equipment to respond adequately can be reduced by a contingency response through the National Guard Bureau's Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC).

Another important consideration for Guardsmen is the implicit social contract traditional Citizen-Soldiers have with their civilian employers. Despite an understanding of what service could entail, many RC Soldiers mobilized for the relatively short-duration Operation Desert Storm strained their employment status, finances, and families. It appears that the majority of RC Soldiers today and their employers understand the requirements of service in the Long War. Legislation such as the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Act and the voluntary enhancement of military leave benefits in many civilian companies has also eased the employment and financial concerns of mobilizing Reservists and Guardsmen even at the current operating pace.

A more predictable schedule of service through a disciplined ARFOGEN cycle of mobilization would certainly enhance this social contract.

Some contend that the operational force policy for the National Guard goes against centuries of tradition. There are even critics within the Army National Guard like Colonel Michael Johnson who argues in a paper entitled “Risking the Guard: Risking America” that the “Guard’s ability to maintain long-term operational competence as both a forward expeditionary force and homeland defense element is, arguably, an extremely challenging and most likely unreachable objective.”³⁸ With the exception of the impact of the deployment of the ARNG from a state during a natural disaster or similar emergency, his arguments are based on the experience during the hap-hazard utilization of the RC (mostly not mobilizing whole units for what they were organized for) prior to the implementation of current policies.

Making sure it is “done right” is critical, but the question of whether it “does the right thing” also has to be addressed. Scholar and conservative commentator Andrew Bacevich, for one, would say no. While he advocates an investment in the National Guard, he believes that it should be focused on homeland defense, as should the entire “imperial army.”³⁹ His advocacy in his book, *The New American Militarism*, echoes the Abrams Doctrine

Will the creation of an army once again pervaded by the spirit of the citizen-soldier impede the future use of force for purposes not related to genuinely vital national interests? In all likelihood, yes — and that is precisely the point.⁴⁰

The essential argument again is whether the RC should be used exclusively as a homeland defense force (and de facto strategic reserve) as Johnson and Bacevich contend, or whether to continue in the direction of the new operational force policy.

Ironically, some would argue that the ARNG's continued service in the Long War is closer to the role that the founding fathers expected of the National Guard: a well trained and equipped militia to provide for the nation's defense.⁴¹ Additionally, any RC (or AC) unit not deployed should automatically be considered part of a layered strategic reserve⁴² with strategic depth provided by the use of the Selective Service should that become necessary.

There are certainly many policies internal to the Army that still need to be resolved to fully implement the RC as the operational reserve. If the ARNG is resourced according to current plans and readiness managed according to the ARFORGEN process, this analysis shows that the ARNG should be capable of both defending the homeland and serving as the nation's operational reserve force. Further, utilizing the ARFORGEN program NGB can manage deployments to ensure that units are available to respond to state emergencies, and Citizen-Soldiers will be able to better balance service commitments with family and employment considerations.

Recommendations

No matter how the policy to transform the RC into the nation's operational reserve was developed, the need for operational forces is important and likely to continue in the era of persistent conflict. The current policy is shown to be feasible for the ARNG as long as the ARFORGEN model is adhered to. The long-term readiness of the ARNG as an operational reserve is at risk should budget considerations cut personnel, equipment, or training resources. The following recommendations are intended to help ensure the success of the ARNG BCTs as a key part of the nation's operational reserve and the success of the policy.

1. The Army must continue to implement the key recommendations of the final report of the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves, “Transforming the National Guard and Reserves into a 21st-Century Operational Force” that operationalize the ARNG. This bipartisan commission was established by Congress and its recommendations were made to enhance the nation’s security. Adhering to the advice is politically expedient for the service since the report already has the endorsement of Congress. While many of the over 90 recommendations enhance the Citizen-Soldier’s quality of service, address culture change, etc., the recommendations that the Army should focus on are: recommendations 29 and 30 regarding funding, recommendation 33 for readiness reporting, recommendation 40 about training, recommendations 42 and 44 as it applies to equipment, and recommendation 91 with regards to institutional support.⁴³ Short term budget pain, in particular to resource the ARNG BCTs, will result in long-term benefits in combat power.
2. While the requirement for ARNG forces in Afghanistan remains at one BCT, the Army should use the “space” provided by the draw-down in Iraq to decisively implement the Army Force Generation Model for the majority of the ARNG. As the Total Force rebalancing continues, not all of the units in the ARNG may be able to get on the current five-year cycle, but a majority should—particularly the BCTs. Given the current make-up of the ARNG BCTs, the National Guard Bureau should ensure

the mix of forces each year includes at least four IBCTs and one HBCT.

NGB also should review the ARFORGEN master schedule to ensure that unit deployments are distributed evenly nationwide so that there are not large gaps in the event of state emergencies.

3. Once ARFORGEN is implemented as designed, the Department of Defense, the Army, and NGB should employ ARFORGEN in a disciplined manner. When the cycle is started, changes should only occur in extreme circumstances. With 28 BCTs in the ARNG, it is possible to ensure that a mix of at least five BCTs are available each year, and a sixth BCT three years out of five. If a state is aware of a major upcoming requirement that will require National Guard Soldiers (for example, Olympic games) and the majority of ARNG Soldiers in that region are deployed, a unit may be substituted or shifted a year later while still ensuring that five BCTs are available.
4. To maintain a high-state of readiness for the operational reserve, an unmissioned, available ARNG BCT should still be mobilized, even if only to spend a month in intensive training. A standard cycle of training and mobilization (whether the unit deploys or not) will allow units to maintain a high-rate of readiness, even if to only enhance their ability to conduct homeland defense missions. As a hedge against United States involvement in World War II, President Roosevelt mobilized Army National Guard Divisions in early 1941, and put them through a comprehensive readiness program. When today's ARNG combat forces

are no longer needed as an expansion force or for a contingency, they should conduct a rigorous training program upon mobilization, utilizing the premier Combat Training Centers when possible. Other training opportunities might include military-to-military engagement with their state partnership⁴⁴ country, or conducting intensive homeland defense training (for example, consequence management for a terrorist attack). Staggering the mobilization of the five or six ARNG BCTs throughout the year could also support some other immediate military or humanitarian contingency.

5. If the current operational tempo decreases and the requirements for the operational reserve decline, the force generation tempo should be reduced as well. Force reductions will simply compromise the ARNG's ability to respond to a future crisis, but extending the ARFORGEN cycle by two years, as an example, still provides the nation with four available BCTs every year and six years to reset and improve readiness.

Conclusion

Clausewitz, the ultimate arbiter of strategy and national security policy, wrote that "A reserve has two purposes. One is to prolong and renew the action; the second to counter unforeseen threats."⁴⁵ Operationalizing the ARNG (particularly the BCTs) is vital to the nation's defense for both these purposes. Such a policy can still fulfill the constitutional role of the ARNG (militia) for homeland defense while meeting the nation's security requirements of the 21st Century. The current strategic environment -- with operations ongoing in Afghanistan and Iraq -- is testimony to the need for ready combat

maneuver organizations to augment active forces in the current campaigns or to deploy to a “come-as-you-are” contingency. Being required to rely on the ARNG (and the USMCR) for operational combat forces for a major theater contingency, also carries on the spirit of the Abrams Doctrine and will make the nation’s leaders seriously consider the ramifications of initiating a conflict before committing citizen-soldiers, and confirms the importance of getting this policy right.

Endnotes

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